

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1 - 21. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently Amended) A method of maturing wine in bulk after fermentation comprising,

storing the wine in a closed container over a period ~~of at least~~ ranging from four to thirty-six months after fermentation of the wine, the container having a capacity of at least 225 litres and self supporting walls, the walls having an exterior exposed to the atmosphere,

wherein ~~the walls of the container~~ has walls that comprise polyethylene and are sufficiently stiff so as to render the container self supporting, and which allows

the walls comprise a combination of thickness, surface area, and volume to permit oxygen to permeate the walls directly from the atmosphere into the wine in contact with the walls at a rate less than 80 milligrams of oxygen per litre of wine per year and the combination of thickness, surface area, and volume provides the container with an oxygen permeation rate that results in wine maturation equivalent to oak cask maturation.

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 22 wherein the wine has a wine surface and the level of the wine surface in the container creates a head space in the container and the wine surface is separated from the head space by a barrier member floating on the wine surface, the barrier member having a peripheral

portion which is in sliding contact with the container walls so as to separate the wine surface from the head space.

25. (Canceled)

26. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 24 wherein permeation rate is less than 55mg/litre of wine/year.

27. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 22 wherein oak staves are suspended in the wine during the storage period.

28. (Withdrawn) A container assembly for controlling rate of oxygen transfer from the atmosphere into a liquid stored in the container assembly comprising, a container with impermeable walls, and

a barrier member which provides a permeable barrier to control oxygen access from the head space in the container to a surface of the liquid, the barrier member having a construction which causes it to float on the liquid surface, with its edge in close proximity to the walls of the container, to substantially separate the liquid surface from the head space.

29. (Withdrawn) The container assembly according to claim 28 comprising a peripheral flange surrounding the barrier member arranged so that it makes slidable peripheral contact with the walls of the container.

30. (Withdrawn) A container assembly for controlling rate of oxygen transfer from the atmosphere into a liquid stored in the container assembly comprising,

a container with walls having an oxygen permeability of 13mg to 65mg of

oxygen per square metre of area of walls of the container for each millimeter of the thickness of the walls per 24 hour period at room temperature, and

a barrier member for providing a barrier to limit oxygen access from head space in the container to a surface of the liquid the barrier member having a construction which causes it to float on the liquid surface, with its edge in close proximity to the walls of the container to substantially separate the liquid surface from the head space.

31. (Withdrawn) The container assembly according to claim 30 comprising a peripheral flange surrounding the barrier member arranged so that it makes a slidable peripheral contact with the walls of the container.

32. (Withdrawn) The container assembly according to claim 30 wherein the container comprises polyethylene.

33. (Withdrawn) The container assembly according to claim 28 comprising a plurality oak staves disposed in the interior of the container in contact with the liquid.

34. (Withdrawn) The container assembly according to claim 28 wherein the barrier member comprises a flexible buoyant core.

35. (Withdrawn) The barrier member as defined in claim 34 wherein the flexible buoyant core is overwrapped with a film of material adapted to limit oxygen transmission through the core to the surface of the liquid.

36. (Withdrawn) The barrier member according to claim 35 having a peripheral flange which comprises the peripheral edge of the film extending laterally

beyond an edge of the core.

37. (Withdrawn) The barrier member as defined in claim 28 comprising at least one tag extending from one side of the barrier member to assist with location and removal of the barrier member.

38. (Withdrawn) The barrier member according to claim 37 wherein the at least one tag comprises a loop.

39. (Withdrawn) The container assembly according to claim 34 comprising a plurality of oak staves suspended in liquid stored in the container.

40. (Canceled)

41. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 22 wherein the permeation rate is less than 55 milligram of oxygen per litre of wine per year.

42. (Currently Amended) A method of maturing a beverage other than table wine in bulk after fermentation of the beverage, comprising:

storing the beverage in a closed container having ~~self-supporting~~ walls over a period ~~of at least~~ ranging from 4 to 36 months after fermentation of the beverage, with the walls being sufficiently stiff so as to render the container self supporting.

wherein the walls are exposed to the atmosphere so as to allow atmospheric oxygen to permeate through the walls ~~to be taken up by the beverage at a rate less than 80 milligram of oxygen per litre of beverage per year, and~~

~~wherein~~ the walls comprise polyethylene ~~of an~~ and a combination of area and thickness ~~chosen to promote~~ that permits controlled maturation of the beverage by

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Application No.: 10/580,524

controlling oxygen permeation through the walls to a rate of less than 80 milligrams of oxygen per litre of wine throughout ~~over the period, and the container has a capacity of at least 225 litres~~ and the combination of area and thickness provides the container with an oxygen permeation rate that results in maturation equivalent to oak cask maturation.